

THE
DIGNITY AND EXCELLENCE
OF
THE GOSPEL
ILLUSTRATED IN A
DISCOURSE

T. Dwight.

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THE
DIGNITY AND EXCELLENCE
OF
THE GOSPEL,
ILLUSTRATED IN A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED APRIL 8, 1812,

AT THE
ORDINATION

OF

THE REV. NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR,

AS PASTOR OF THE
FIRST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

IN NEW-HAVEN.

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D. L. L. D.

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE CHARGE AND RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

TO THE MINISTER,

AND THE

CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

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A DISCOURSE,

&c.

1 PETER i. 12.

—*Which things angels desire to look into.*

THE things, of which *St. Peter* speaks in this passage, are explained by him in the context. They are styled, *The salvation of the soul; the reward of faith; the things testified by the Spirit of Christ concerning his sufferings, and the glory that should follow them; and the things, which had been reported, or announced, to the Christians of lesser Asia, by those who had preached the Gospel to them, with the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven; i. e. by those whose preaching had been accompanied by the inspiration, and miracles, of the Holy Ghost; in other words, by Paul and his immediate companions; the preachers, who principally carried the news of salvation into that country. To him, who is willing to bestow even the slightest attention upon this various phraseology, it will be evident, that these things can be no other than the sum, and substance, of the Gospel.*

Into these things angels are here said to desire to look. The Cherubim in the tabernacle, whose wings overshadowed the mercy-seat, were formed in a bending posture; with their faces looking down on this divine symbol, as if earnestly desirous to pry into the wonders, which it represented. In the text, "*angels,*" it

is said, *αγγελιοι*, (not *οι αγγελοι*, *the angels*,) “*desire to look into these things*,” *εις α επιθυμουν αγγελιοι πικρακυψαι*: “*into which things angels earnestly desire to stoop* ;” in other words, “*into which things angels earnestly desire to pry, with the most attentive investigation*.”

By angels, here, is denoted *the whole Host of heaven*, involving all its orders, and dignities: the relish for the object of inquiry being the same to all, and the spirit of investigation the same.

If these exalted beings are thus desirous to search into the Gospel, and the system of religion which it contains; it is because the precepts, and doctrines, which it unfolds, and the facts, which it declares, merit their inquisition. *The intellect, and the circumstances, of angels are such, as to prevent them from error*. Their minds are indeed finite; and their knowledge must, therefore, have its boundaries. Still they admit nothing but truth; and, so far as their capacity enables them to understand any subject, they see it as it is. They have no bias, no prejudice, no inordinate desires. *The love, which is enjoined in the Gospel upon men; which is declared to be the fulfilling of the law; and which reigns in their minds with an absolute and undivided dominion; rejoices in the truth; and prompts them to embrace it always, and alone, wherever it may be found*.

At the same time, *these exalted beings are possessed, also, of the most noble and refined taste*. Their relish is as regularly conformed to truth, as their *intellect*. Nothing little can engross their attention: nothing debased can give them pleasure. All the objects, which they relish, are of course important, and valuable. When, therefore, we are informed, that the Gospel is an object of their earnest investigation; we are also

informed, that it is an object of supreme value, and importance.

It is to be remembered, that, when the text was written, these celestial beings had been employed in studying the subjects, contained in the Gospel, more than four thousand years. From the time, when it was first published in the sentence, denounced on the serpent who deceived our first parents, to the day, in which *his head was bruised* by the Redeemer of mankind in the completion of the work, which he came to accomplish, they had watched the progress of this divine system of dispensations with the most minute, and critical, examination. During this long period also, they had been voluntarily, and actively, employed, as *ministering spirits*, in carrying the designs, which it involved, into execution. In this manner they acquired a knowledge of the Gospel; which was in many respects experimental; and understood it far more perfectly, than even they could have done in the exercise of mere speculation. Besides, they had dwelt, during this period at least, in the highest heavens. Heaven, the place both of their birth, and their residence, is not only the native region of truth, but also the scene of the most sublime and glorious dispensations in the universe. In that world all the wonders of Providence are consummated. In that world the perfections of God are manifested in their supreme beauty, splendour, and greatness. Every thing which it contains is refined; every thing is noble; every thing is for ever improving. But, after all their acquaintance with the glories of heaven, angels earnestly desired to look into the things, which are contained in the Gospel.

The wonder, excited by this fact, will be lessened.

if we remember, that “ *God created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, by means of the Church, ἡ πολυποικίλος σοφία θεοῦ, the immensely various wisdom of God.*” Such apposite, and advantageous, means of exhibiting the divine wisdom to principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, were involved in this system of dispensations to the Church, that the Most High deemed it a sufficient reason for the creation of all things. With this consideration in view, we cannot think it strange, that the system of the Gospel should command the researches of angels; since God has thus clearly indicated, that they will here find displays of his manifold wisdom, which will enlighten their understanding, and exalt their views, after all their acquaintance with the dispensations of heaven. Our wonder will probably cease, if we further remember, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Agent in the system of the Gospel; and that his character, actions, and sufferings, are the principal subjects of its doctrines, precepts, narratives, and institutions. “ *By Him,*” saith St. Paul, “ *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.*” If the Creator of thrones and dominions, of principalities and powers, thought it proper for himself to become the supreme Agent in this system; it must cease to excite admiration, that those of his creatures, the energy of whose minds is formed of unmingled virtue, should delight to sustain a subordinate agency in its dispensations, and to study the mysteries, involved in a work so wonderful, and sublime.

To him, who assents to the truth of Revelation, this passage amply proves *the dignity, and excellency*, of the Gospel. To prove the truth of a Scriptural doctrine is, however, but one, and that, often, the least necessary, and the least laborious, object of preaching. To illustrate the nature of the doctrine, and the manner in which it is true, and to impress its importance on the minds of those who hear, are always objects of high moment; and often demand the chief attention of the preacher. Where a doctrine is merely proved, it is loosely regarded, and rarely remembered; but, when it is clearly illustrated, and forcibly applied, a hope may justly be entertained, that the impressions, which are made on the minds of an audience, will be permanent, and useful. With this hope, I will now attempt to illustrate **THE IMPORTANCE, DIGNITY, AND EXCELLENCE, OF THE GOSPEL**, by several considerations, which, if I mistake not, are suited to such a design. In the mean time, those, who hear me, will remember, as they cannot fail distinctly to perceive, that to do justice to the subject is beyond the power of a *human* preacher; and demands at least the abilities, possessed by the beings, who have thought it deserving of their own most laborious investigation. Even angels could not do it justice. In itself, and in its consequences, it will engage their study, and admiration, for ever; and they will perpetually find their former views of its extent, and value, inadequate, and, in many ways, imperfect. What then must be the views of a man? *St. Paul*, when *this treasure* was committed to him and his inspired companions, informs us, that it was placed *in earthen vessels*; coarse, frail, and perishable. Succeeding ministers will certainly station themselves below the level of the Apostles.

The Gospel, by which I intend, in this discourse, the Scriptures at large, is a *History of the Mediatorial kingdom of the Deity*; of that kingdom, which involves all the concerns of the children of Adam. From every other history it is infinitely different in the nobleness of its subject. Kings and heroes, nations and empires, the highest subjects of other histories, have here little significance. Jehovah is the Potentate, the Messiah the Hero, his children the nation, his actions the events, and his kingdom the empire, which engross the labours of the sacred historians.

The Design of this kingdom, is the salvation of an endless multitude of immortal beings. In this design are equally included their deliverance from sin and misery, and their exaltation to virtue and happiness, which will know no end.

The Theatre, in which this design, and all the events, connected with its accomplishment, are completed, is proportionally majestic; and is formed of heaven, earth, and hell; the stage of probation, and the seats of retribution, for the righteous and the wicked.

Proportionally dignified also, are *the Actors* in this magnificent plot. Kings and nations are, here, forgotten. Moral dignity is alone regarded, where the design is salvation; and the actors, employed in accomplishing it, are prophets and apostles, the general Assembly of the first-born, principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, and the infinitely glorious persons of the Godhead.

The Duration of this kingdom is eternal.

The Laws, by which it is governed, are, like the Author of them, holy, just, and good. They are so simple, as to be comprised in two commands; yet so

extensive, as to reach all the possible actions of intelligent creatures; so short, and so plain, as to be sufficiently understood, easily remembered, and obviously applied by every moral agent; so honourable to the law-giver, as if nothing beside his honour had been consulted in their formation; so beneficent to his subjects, as if devised only for their happiness.

The Ultimate End of this kingdom is the manifestation of the glory, or excellency, of God. For the accomplishment of this end, *He, who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation; took upon him the form of a servant; and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that is named in this world, and that which is to come: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.*

The benevolence of God is the glory of his character. “*God,*” saith the apostle John, “*is love.*” This peculiarly divine attribute was illustriously displayed to the angels in heaven, in the communication of their exalted powers, in quickening their minds with unmingled virtue, and in replenishing them with pure and immortal enjoyment. But these *just* beings *need no repentance*. They have ever been obedient, and, therefore, have ever been happy. They could not be forgiven; for they had never sinned. They could not be redeemed; for they had never been cast off.

But in fallen man the benevolence of God found a

new object; an object, on which its finished beauty might be exhibited in a manner, unknown even to angels. *God commendeth his love to us, to angels, and to all beings, who are witnesses of it, in that, while we were yet sinners, he gave his Son to die for us.* This is the consideration, on which the apostles dwell with such transport, when they descant upon *the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.* This was the theme, which warmed the tongue of the angel, when he said to the shepherds of *Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people!"* This was the enrapturing subject, which tuned the voices of his heavenly companions when they sung, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good-will towards men!"*

Mankind were the lowest order of rational beings; were born of the dust; and were allied to worms. Still they had revolted from God; and with the impudence, as well as the hostility, of rebellion, had said unto him, *"Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?"* Although *His eternal power and Godhead were from the beginning, clearly seen throughout the world, being every where understood by any mind willing to understand them;* they denied his perfections; impeached his government; questioned his existence; and said in their hearts, *"There is no God."* Creatures, and those the vilest, and most insignificant, *they worshipped, rather than the Creator.* From the east to the west, from the north to the south, temples innumerable, raised for the worship of stocks, and men, and devils, insulted the

Skies: and altars, *from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same*, smoked, not with incense and oblations only; not with victims, selected from the fold and the stall; but with human blood. Nations immolated the best, and brightest youths of their age and country. Parents *caused their own children to pass through the fire unto Moloch*.

Equally gross, vile, and dreadful, was their conduct to each other. Rulers wielded a sceptre of iron; and every where set up the gaol and the gibbet, the stake and the cross, as the instruments of their sway, and the symbols of their character. The hero waded through the blood, and planted his laurels amid the bones, of men. Fields were *sown with salt*; and cities rose in flames to heaven. The robber haunted the high-way; the thief prowled around the cottage; and the assassin lurked behind the curtain of night. The soul was infected with a plague; and without a physician, without a remedy, to check the malignant poison, it decayed, died, and became a loathsome mass of corruption.

Thus the world was one great scene of desolation. Nor were its miseries allayed even by hope, that *balm of Gilead* to a wounded spirit. Its situation was dreadful; its *prospects* were replete with horror. With heaven its communication was cut off. God was unknown, and forgotten. The path of life was unoccupied, and unsought. Year after year, and age after age, rolled over its melancholy regions; and saw no messenger arrive from distant, happier climes, with tidings of restoration, or deliverance. It was a world in ruins; a vast sepulchre, hung round with darkness, and replenished with decay and death; where no sound of consolation pierced the slumber-

ing ear, and no beam of hope reillamined the eye, closed in eternal night.

On such a world it was impossible for God to look without abhorrence. That righteous law, by which he governs the universe, had declared, "*The soul, which sinneth, shall die.*" But every child of Adam had sinned : all, therefore, were irreversibly condemned to death. Nor could the *law pass*, without the fulfilment of every *jot, and tittle*, included in it ; although the fulfilment should require the destruction of *the heavens and the earth*. In this state of absolute despair, *the Father of all mercies* was pleased to say, "*Deliver the soul of man from going down to the pit ; for I have found a ransom.*" Heaven was startled at the declaration ; and the bosoms of all its inhabitants trembled with astonishment and rapture. They had seen their own apostate companions cast out of the regions of happiness, and "*reserved in chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day.*" No more favourable destiny could be expected for man.

The ransom found, was the life of the Son of God ; *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*. The gift, on the part of the Father, was the greatest of all gifts. The self-denial, on the part of the Son, was the highest possible self-denial. The sacrifice was infinite ; and could not be demanded, even by a suffering universe. It was conceived only by boundless wisdom ; it could be executed only by boundless love.

The destiny of our race, announced by the law of God, and the reversion, proclaimed by the Gospel of his Son, will strongly illustrate the nature of this transaction. The interests of the immense and eternal kingdom of JEHOVAH demand, absolutely, the

final exclusion of all those, who rebel against his government, from every future good. Sin is the die, which, cast once, is cast for ever. The career, once entered upon, is endless: *None that commence it turn again; neither take they hold of the paths of life.* Misery is both its concomitant, and its consequence. To sin, and suffer, through ages which cannot end, was, therefore, the certain, final allotment of every child of *Adam*. The sin was entire; the suffering was complete. The sinner was removed beyond the desire, and beyond the attainment, of any virtuous, or amiable quality. The sufferer was placed beyond the hope, and beyond the possibility, of any alleviation, or of any end, of his wo. To such beings, how vast must be the accumulation of wretchedness, in the progress of ages! Proportional is the value of the deliverance, and the extent of the wisdom, and goodness, by which it is accomplished.

Proportionally bright and glorious, also, is the destiny, opened by the promises of the Gospel. "*He, that spared not his own Son,*" saith the apostle, "*but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?"* The greatest gift He has already bestowed; it cannot be strange, that he should willingly give every thing else to those, on whom it was bestowed. A mind here, pure and perfect, united to a body immortal like itself, and *refashioned like the glorious body of Christ*, will begin, and advance in, an eternal progress of knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment; of gratitude, adoration, and praise; of moral glory, and divine beauty; in the house of God; amid the innumerable company of angels; and united to the general assembly of the first-born. Beneficence will be its business; heaven will be its home.

No enemy will disturb, no fear lessen, no casualty interrupt, and no succession of ages terminate, the transports of the blessed. Before the throne of infinite mercy they will sing, with the harps of angels, “ *Unto Him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings, and priests, unto God, even his Father; to him be glory, and dominion for ever. Amen.*”

Perfectly suited to the magnificence of this scheme are the *Doctrines and Precepts* of the Gospel. The *doctrines* are, every where, such as become the Author of them; such as *become godliness*; such as are plainly derived from the Wisdom, and fraught with the Excellence, of JEHOVAH. His character is here drawn by an unerring hand. The lines are all lines of the most perfect symmetry; the colours are the colours of heaven. United, they form the only portrait, beneath the sun, in which is seen the likeness of a God. Heathen philosophers, and modern Infidels, have only caricatured their Maker.

Equally noble and excellent are the *Precepts*. The heathen philosophers understood not the nature of virtue, or of vice; nor discerned the boundary, by which they are separated. Infidels have voluntarily blended them; and left them a mere mass of mixture and confusion. The distinction between them was originally begun, and has ever been continued, in the Gospel. With a discrimination, unknown to all other moral systems, it separates universally, good and evil thoughts, words, and actions; and suffers not a single transgression of the most exact, and most refined, bounds of virtuous conduct.

So comprehensive are the doctrines of the Gospel, that they involve all moral truth, known by man: so

extensive are the precepts, that they require every virtue, and forbid every sin. Nothing has been added to either by the labours of philosophy, or the progress of human experience.

Proportionally noble, also, are the *sentiments*, and even the *descriptions*, contained in the Gospel. Compared with them, the highest efforts of *Greece* and *Rome*, celebrated as they have been, are low, little, and childish. This was, indeed, a thing of course. The gods, whose characters and actions were the basis of their moral and religious systems, were themselves vicious, groveiling, despicable beings; greatly inferior in respectability, and worth, to such men, as *Atticus*, or *Titus Vespasian*. But the mind of the moral teacher will never ascend higher, than the character, which he forms of the object of his worship. In some instances, I readily acknowledge, they uttered noble and sublime thoughts concerning their deities; particularly concerning *Jupiter*, the chief of their *dii majores* gentium*. But, for all these thoughts they were indebted, originally, to hints, gleaned from foreigners, and derived ultimately from Revelation. Aided in this manner, their minds, which, in several instances, were of a superior mould, formed conceptions of this nature, which were honourable to their talents. But every such effort was merely the leap, not the steady flight, of imagination: much less was it the elevated course of enlightened intelligence. Accordingly, the *whole representation* of the subject, made by any such writer, is a monstrous mass of debasement, varied, in solitary instances only, by more just and elevated conceptions. By the Scriptural writers we are uniformly presented, not with the unworthy

* Superior gods.

actions of gods plural; imperfect; mutable; debased with human immoralities; unable to discern, or prevent, the course of things established by fate; dissenting from each other with mutual enmity, and mutual sufferings; endangered by the rebellion of creatures, and defended by their assistance; but with the perfect agency of JEHOVAH; by whose wisdom all things were contrived; by whose word they were created; by whose arm they are upheld; and to whose glory, with a solemn progress, they unceasingly operate; unfolded in images, and declarations, so noble and majestic, as to wear on their very face the impression of divinity.

The Catastrophe, by which all the intricacies, and wonders, of this immense plot are unravelled, is formed by the proceedings of the final day. The Son of God will then descend from heaven in clouds; surrounded by the glory of his father, and accompanied by all his holy Angels. He will then summon the dead from the grave; and reanimate the dust, of which their bodies were formed. The innumerable nations of men will stand upon their feet in a moment; and be gathered around the tribunal of Infinite Justice. The wicked will be doomed *to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*: and the righteous admitted *to the kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world*. The visible heavens will then *pass away with a great noise*; the earth will be consumed with fire; the Son *will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; and *God will be all in all*.

Thus, my brethren, have I attempted to illustrate the nature of this subject; and have exhibited, in a very imperfect and summary manner, the parts, of which it is primarily constituted. Into these things

angels earnestly desire to look, and all, who, like angels, relish the beauty, greatness, and glory, of the Godhead.

From these observations I infer,

I. *That the Gospel is a Revelation from God.*

To do justice to this inference, as connected with these premises, would require a series of volumes. Still, the following considerations, briefly as they must be suggested, may, in some degree, be useful to those who hear me. The *Jews*, it is well known, were never distinguished for learning, or science. By the *Romans*, after they became acquainted with them, they were spoken of only with contempt. By modern Infidels they have been still more despised; and made the objects of more contemptuous wit, and more bitter obloquy. The *Greeks*, and *Romans*, on the contrary, were eminently learned, and scientific. The former, also, have been generally considered as holding the first rank of human genius; and the latter, as excelling in wisdom every nation, which went before them. Whence, then, let me ask, have the *Jewish* writers left those of *Greece* and *Rome* so far behind them, in their exhibitions of moral and religious subjects? On all other subjects the *Greeks* and *Romans* speak like men: on these they lisp like children. Children every where else, the *Jewish* writers here speak, not like men, but like angels. The God, whom they describe, is indeed *very God*. His attributes they have formed in a manner, perfectly suited to that Being, who is the first cause, and the last end of all things. Nothing can be added to them: nothing, without impiety, can be taken from them. In all the writings of the human race there can be found no rival to them, and no second. But they have not merely *drawn* his charac-

ter : they have exhibited him as the universal *Agent* ; and, fearlessly entering upon a task, the most difficult, which was ever assumed by man, have ascribed to him an immense series of *actions*, perfectly suited to the stupendous character, which they have drawn, and fraught with a sublimity, hyperbolical and amazing. These actions are, the Creation of the heavens and the earth ; the preservation and government of the universe ; the accomplishment of our Redemption ; the final judgment of angels and men ; and the endless retribution of the righteous, and the wicked. Compared with the JEHOVAH of the Gospel, the gods of heathen philosophy are motes, compared with the luminary, in whose beams alone they are visible.

The system of dispensations, here attributed to this mighty Agent, is boundlessly vast, and immensely complicated. The parts, of which it is composed, admit neither of number, nor of measure. What cause expanded the minds of these men over this unlimited field of thought ? Whence were they able to fathom depths, where the rest of mankind merely floated ? Whence is it, that they never sink beneath the grandeur of their subject ? never wander from its truth ? and never halt amid its complications ? Whence is it, that all move on with perfect harmony ? and, while the writers of other nations dissent endlessly, not only from each other, but from themselves, these maintain a perfect consistency from the beginning to the end ?

By the heathen philosophers, even the ablest and best of them, *Morality* is only darkened, and debased. They discerned neither the nature, nor the limits, of vice and virtue. Against the former, indeed, they inveighed, and the latter they eulogized, with a vigo-

rous eloquence ; yet they very often exposed virtue, and adorned vice ; and alternately enjoined, and prohibited, both, with a confusion of thought, and a depravity of heart, which make their instructions means of corruption merely, and never of reformation. The Scriptural writers, on the contrary, enjoin virtue only, prohibit only vice, and define both, in a manner so exact, and yet so obvious, that a child needs not mistake them. *Their way of holiness is a high-way ; and way-faring men, though fools, will never necessarily err therein.*

The philosophers of antiquity saw clearly, that mankind were sinners, and needed pardon and justification. In this stupendous subject *Socrates* advanced so far, as to doubt whether it were possible for God to forgive sin. But this, painful as is the conclusion, was a stretch of wisdom, never attained by any other philosopher. Whence, then, did the apostles derive their system of Redemption ? Who enabled them to find a Redeemer ? a scheme of pardon, a scheme of justification, so satisfactory, that no man, by whom it was understood, was ever yet afraid to venture his soul upon its issue ?

It is a remark of *Johnson*, that in all the poetry of *Greece* and *Rome*, and I add, without hesitation, in the philosophy and history, also, *there is not a single truly amiable character.* The cause of this essential defect, as justly assigned by this great man, is, their unacquaintance with the Gospel. Whence, then, let me ask, did the Evangelists form their character of the Redeemer ? A character, not amiable only, but perfect : a character, compared with which, the brightest on the pages of heathenism, is a rush-light to the sun.

To these philosophers also, *a future state of being* was unknown. Several of them, indeed, conjectured, and a few hoped for, such an existence. By what means did the Scriptural writers become possessed, not of hopes and conjectures, but of the knowledge, of this interesting subject? Whence did they derive their resurrection; their heaven; their glorious immortality?

To comprehend the true import of all these observations, it is necessary to remember, that there are, in the Scriptures, at least one hundred different writers and speakers, employed on these various subjects; that they lived through a succession of fifteen hundred years, and in all the states of society, involved in that period; that they were of every class, from the prince to the peasant; and that they wrote in almost every form, which discourse admits, and on occasions as various, as were the writers themselves. Yet these characteristics belong to them all. They have the same God ever in view; the same Redeemer; the same salvation; the same immortal life. Their views of holiness, and of sin, are alike comprehensive, and exact. Their precepts all require, and all forbid, the same things. The grandeur of their views, and the sublimity of their conceptions, are, also, every where wonderful. With an eagle's eye they all look directly at the Sun; and with an eagle's wing ascend perpetually towards the glorious luminary.

To impress this subject with its proper force, let me exhibit it in a single point of view.

The apostle John was born in an age, when the philosophy of his country was a mere mass of quibbling; its religion a compound of pride and bigotry; and its worship a ceremonious parade. His lineage, his circumstances, his education, and his employment, were those of a fisherman.

On what possible, natural principle can it then be accounted for, that, like the sun breaking out of an evening cloud, this plain man, in these circumstances, should, at an advanced age, burst upon mankind with such a flood of effulgence and glory? Whence did it arise, that in purity of precept; sublimity of thought; discernment, of truth; knowledge of virtue and duty; and an acquaintance with the moral character of man, and the attributes of his Maker; this peasant leaves *Socrates, Plato, and Cicero*, out of sight, and out of remembrance? Do you question the truth of this representation? The proof is at hand, and complete. There is not a child of fifteen, in this house, nor, if possessed of the common education, in this land, who would not disdain to worship *their* Gods, or embrace their religion. But *Bacon* and *Boyle, Butler* and *Berkeley, Newton* and *Locke, Addison* and *Johnson, Jones* and *Horsley*, have submissively embraced the religion of *St. John*; and worshipped the God, whose character he has unfolded. *Their* systems have long since gone to the grave of oblivion. *His* has been animated with increasing vigour to the present hour; and will live, and flourish, through endless ages. *Their* writings have not made one man virtuous. *His* have peopled heaven with the children of light. The 17th chapter of his Gospel, written, as it is, with the simplicity of a child, yet in grandeur of conception, and splendour of moral excellence, triumphs, with inexpressible glory, over all the efforts of human genius, and looks down from heaven on the proudest labours of Infidelity.

Nor are *the Images*, formed by the mind of this Apostle, disproportioned to his moral sentiments. Read his description of our Saviour, amid the seven

golden candlesticks; of the majesty of God, and of the divine assembly of the first-born in the highest heavens; of *the angel*, at whose command *the seven thunders uttered their voices*; of *the woman, clothed with the sun*; of *the King of kings*, at the head of his armies; of the solemn transactions at the great day; and of *the New Jerusalem, coming down from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband*; and tell me in what nation, in what writer, counterparts for them can be found? Hear him in a few plain, unadorned expressions leave every effort of Grecian genius out of comparison. “*And I saw a great white throne, and him, that sat on it; from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away; and there was found no place for them.*”

At the same time, the immensely complicated and mysterious scheme of Redemption, and the vast system of Providential dispensations, founded upon it, were distinctly comprehended by the mind of this humble man. These amazing subjects he has handled in innumerable instances, and forms: and light, beauty, and glory, have every where sprung up at his touch.

Let us now make this case practical. Suppose the most ingenious fisherman of this country were to attempt the same subjects; and to form a new scheme of Redemption, and a new system of Providence. What, does common sense declare, must be the character of his writings? Yet in this country fishermen, as well as all other men, are educated in a manner, far superior to that, which existed in Judea at the time of the apostle *John*: and here, also, their conceptions on these subjects are enlarged, and ennobled, by his writings, and those of his fellow-apostles. I will only ask further, what man of any talents, and

with any education, could now write as *St. John* has written?

II. *From these observations, also, I argue the folly of Infidelity.*

Angels delight in the Gospel: Infidels loathe it. Angels earnestly study it with the deepest attention: Infidels cast it away. Angels learn from it the manifold wisdom of God in his dispensation to his Church: Infidels treat it with contempt and derision; and, proud of their own attainments, and lapped in self-sufficiency, coolly say, "*Doubtless we are the people; and wisdom shall die with us.*" To which will common sense give the palm of wisdom?

Infidels are losers by their rejection of the gospel in the enjoyments of taste; in intellectual enjoyment; in their character; in their hopes; and in their end.

Educated Infidels covet the character of men of taste; and boast of possessing it in a superiour degree. The primary objects of taste are novelty, grandeur, beauty, and benevolence. The three former are extensively diffused over the natural world; the moral world is replenished with them all. The beauty and grandeur of the natural world; the beauty of the landscape, and of the sky; the grandeur of the storm, the torrent, the thunder, and the volcano; the magnificence of mountains, and the ocean; and the sublimities of the heavens; may undoubtedly be relished by the mind of an Infidel, as really as by that of a Christian. But how insignificant are even these splendid scenes of nature, if the universe is only a lifeless mass; a corpse devoid of an animating principle? How changed is the scene; how enhanced the sublimity; when our thoughts discern, that an Infinite Mind formed, preserves, controls, and quickens, the whole; that

this Mind is every where present; lives; sees; acts; directs; and blesses the beings, whom it has made; that, *if we ascend into heaven, God is there; if we go down to hell; lo, He is there! if we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there his hand will lead us, and his right hand hold us.* At the same time, how infinitely more sublime is such a Mind, than all the works, which it has created! “*I am, saith JEHOVAH, and there is none else. All nations, before me, are as nothing; and they are accounted unto me less than nothing and vanity.*”

In the moral world their loss is entire. Of the beauty, and greatness, of that world they form no conceptions. For these objects their taste is not begun. The pleasures, derived from this source, are the privilege only of minds, which are invested with moral beauty, and adorned with the loveliness of the Gospel.

In the field of *Intellectual enjoyment* they are not more happy. Infidels are not unfrequently men of learning, and of science; but their learning is usually mischievous to them; and their science, of no value: for both serve only to inflate them with pride, and estrange them from their Maker.

Moral science is the end of that, which is physical. In this field the attainments of Infidels are *oppositions of science, falsely so called*; a collection of dreams, more specious, and decent, but equally unreal with those of *Behmen*; and bearing the same relation to knowledge, as a romance to history. What is the world in the eye of an Infidel? A product of fate, chance, or necessity; without design; without government; without a God: its inhabitants born, none knows why; and destined to go, none knows whither.

Of duty, virtue, worship, acceptance with God, and the rewards of obedience, they know, and choose to know, nothing. To them the moral universe is a chaos. The Gospel, looking on this mass of confusion, has said, “ *Let there be light :” and there is light.*

But, although this *light has come into the world*, Infidels have *loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* Instead of the pleasure, furnished by the glorious truths of the moral system, they find only doubt and perplexity. *Sweet as the light* is to those, who have eyes to see it; and *pleasant* as it is *to behold the Sun* of righteousness; Infidels turn away their sight from this divine object; and therefore only grope, and stumble, and fall.

In *their Character* their loss is inestimable. It is the loss of Evangelical virtue; of the esteem of all the wise and good; and of the approbation of God.

Inestimable, also, is their loss of *Hope.* They reject the Redeemer; and are, therefore, left to stand on the ground of their own obedience. But they have never obeyed; and are, therefore, condemned by the law, which they have only broken. Reason decides, that God does not love, and cannot reward, bad men. This decision Revelation repeats in thunder. But Infidels are all sinners. The only objects before them are, of course, annihilation, or endless wo.

“ *There is,*” saith Solomon, “ *a way, which seemeth good to a man : but the end thereof is a bitter death.*” Were the Gospel as untrue, as Infidels assert; they would be no gainers. If it should be true; what will become of them? What must be the feelings of an Infidel on a dying bed, if he is then in possession of sober thought; and solemnly remembers his contempt

for the Saviour, and his rejection of the offers of life ? With what emotions must he enter Eternity ?

III. *This subject furnishes every minister of the Gospel instructions of supreme importance.*

Some of these I shall address immediately to the Pastor elect.

You have heard, my friend, and brother, an imperfect representation of that Gospel, to the ministration of which you are this day solemnly called, of the purity of its precepts, the excellence of its doctrines, and the glory of that divine kingdom, of which it contains the history. Let me address to you these all-important considerations with the freedom, and the affection of a friend, and a minister.

Let me remind you, that in the Gospel, as in a mirror, clear and undeceiving, is imaged in the strongest manner, and in living colours, the dignity of your office ; not a dignity, fostering ambition, nor flattering pride ; but a dignity, existing wholly in the mind, shining in every meek and humble grace, and adorning a life, consecrated to GOD, and useful to mankind.— In all your efforts for the salvation of men, you are here taught to regard yourself as a fellow-labourer with angels ; as co-operating with the Redeemer.— He also preached the Gospel ; and, although *his name is above every name*, adorned his office with far other splendours than pomp and pride. Let me urge on you his perfect example, and the exalted subject of his preaching, as a divine combination of motives, indispensably necessary to so imperfect a creature, as man, to do nothing, which will not become the disciple of such a Master.

Among the attributes, which form a dignified character, none is more essential than *faithfulness*. To

this excellence every inducement is presented by the revealed system. It points you to an all-seeing GOD, intent with an awful and searching eye upon every part of your conduct ; an infinitely faithful Redeemer, present in every trial, and every distress, to accomplish the salvation, which you preach ; a cloud of witnesses, faithfully spending, and cheerfully sacrificing, their lives for the same desirable purpose ; the immortal life of your own soul, and the souls of your congregation, placed in colours of life before your eyes, and appealing with immense solemnity and endearment to your heart. Your great duty, which is *the manifestation of the truth*, will call you continually to encounter many temptations, from the love of popularity, the fear of offending, and the desire of seeing peace in your days. In the same system are the means, and the motives, by which you may avoid them, set before you in the strongest light. It may be profitable, on this solemn occasion, to remind you, that you are there considered as a stranger here below ; destitute of an abiding city ; and wandering through the wilderness of human life to that invisible world, where every faithful minister will find his eternal residence. Between that world, and the present, it is the only channel of communication. It opens the gates of those regions, which spirits unembodied and immortal inhabit. It teaches you, that in that world you will need dignity, recommendation, and enjoyment, infinitely more than in this ; and that the qualifications, which will confer these blessings on you there, are very different from those, which will produce them here. To the inhabitants of that world it will be a matter of perfect indifference, whether you have here dwelt in a palace, or in a shed ; have ruled an empire,

or fed a flock. So different are the views, and manners, of that world from the same things in this, that to have been *rich in faith*, to have been *an heir of the promises*, and to have performed faithfully the solemn office, which you have chosen, will be higher dignity, a stronger recommendation, and a source of more extensive enjoyment, than to have swayed the sceptre of a world. If you suitably realize these considerations; no others *will move you*; *neither will you account even your life dear to yourself*; so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry, which you receive of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

In the faithful manifestation of the truth you will undoubtedly experience many distresses from insensibility, opposition, and evil speaking. The great preacher informs you, that, *if the world hate you, it hated him also*; and that it is enough for the servant, if he be as his Lord. *He hath not left you comfortless. He hath prayed the Father*; and *He hath given you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth*; that he may abide with you for ever. Seek earnestly to be purified; labour earnestly to purify yourself; that you may become *a temple, fitted for the inhabitation of this divine guest*. From him will you derive the peace, which Christ left to his disciples; *the joy*, which he alone *can give*, and which the universe is unable to *take away*. Grudge not, therefore, the worldling his wealth, the statesman his power, the philosopher his science, the man of taste his villa, or the sensualist his dainties. To you the Gospel unfolds treasures, which are real, and unlimited; influence, which will extend through immortal ages; science, sublime, immense, and rapturous; a mansion

in the house of GOD ; and an eternal banquet, gathered from that Eden, which his own right hand hath planted. Here enjoyment will be your interest, your honour, and your duty. Here intemperance and satiety cannot exist. Here indulgence is bounded only by the capacity.

In the Gospel, to the ministration of which you are this day to be consecrated, is embodied that exalted science, which you are especially concerned to attain. Immensely different from the cold speculative systems of philosophy, which, although they sometimes amuse the head, have no connection with the heart ; the doctrines, involved in this science, are all practical, divinely efficacious on the character, and means, at the same time, of expanding, ennobling, and purifying, the soul. At every step, as you advance in this knowledge, it will make you not only more learned, but more virtuous, and more useful. Every step, also, will be a step of delight. Here, and here only, truth outruns all the efforts of fiction, in beauty, sublimity, and glory. Whatever is great to the view of the intellect, whatever is sublime to the eye of imagination, whatever is ravishing to the feelings of the heart, is found here, in degrees, which cannot be limited. In the pursuit of this truth the mind is not merely delighted, but enraptured ; is not merely elevated, but ennobled ; does not merely look on, but, while it looks, is *changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.* These are, *the things,* into which *angels desire to look.* Shall not men, infinitely interested in them, shall not ministers, whose first duty it is to communicate them to others, follow their example ? Those, who would resemble angels, must love the employments of angels. Unite, then, with these

exalted beings in studying the divine system of truth, contained in the Gospel. Here you will find all, which you need, under GOD, to make you a blessing in this world, and to assure you in the world to come of an inheritance in the kingdom of glory.

The same system of truth cannot but inspire you with the strongest benevolence to the people, committed to your charge. We hope, we trust, you preach a GOD, who has pardoned you; a Saviour, who has died for you; doctrines, which you firmly believe; and precepts, which you faithfully intend to obey; endless misery, from which you hope to escape; and endless happiness, in which you hope to share. Make, then, their interest your own; feel for them, as for yourself. Think what it is to be saved; what it is to perish. Recollect daily, that they may be your companions in heaven; and that through eternity you may enjoy the transport of remembering, that you have been the instrument of their salvation. Through eternity they may remember, that under your ministry they were born of GOD; made heirs of endless life; and fitted for the glory of heaven. Think what a consummation of your ministry it will be to lead them up to the throne of judgment, at the final day; and to say to him, who died on the cross, "*Behold, here am I, and the children, whom thou hast given me.*" Think what it will be through endless ages to have their blessings heaped upon your head.

With these solemn considerations always in full view, you will labour, earnestly, to *come forth* to this people *in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace.* Your sermons, before they are brought to the house of GOD, you will water with your tears, and embalm with your prayers. You will *plant the seed* of life,

with all humility of mind ; and with many tears, you will beseech the Author of all blessings to give the increase. You will remember, you will feel that you are appointed by the great Shepherd to *watch this flock in the fear of God, as one who must give an account.* But what must be the account, given by a minister, at the bar of **GOD**, of a wasted life ; of squandered talents ; of sloth, and cowardice, in his master's service ; of a perverted Gospel ; of an abused ministry ; of faithless sermons ; and of a neglected flock, left by himself to error, sin, and ruin, precluded from eternal life, lulled into the sleep of death, and led to perdition !

With these awful considerations in view, who, that deserves the name of a minister, who, that deserves the name of a man, can fail of delivering the message of **GOD** boldly, fervently, faithfully, with the deepest tenderness, with the strongest yearnings of affection. Must not his heart beat ; must not his voice tremble ; when he rehearses to dying creatures, hastening to the judgment, the terrors of the final day, and the burnings of devouring fire ? Must not his bosom heave ; must not his eye kindle ; must not his tongue glow ; when he repeats the wonders of redemption, the sufferings of the cross, the excellency and loveliness of the Redeemer, the mercy of a forgiving and sanctifying **GOD**, and the glories of immortal life ; when he puts his hand on the door of heaven ; and, opening it for the entrance of his flock, discloses to them the throne of **GOD** and the Lamb, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the first born surrounding the tree of Life, and singing with transport the eternal hymn ; *Blessing, and honour, and glory,*

and power, be unto Him, that sitteth on the throne; and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen!

IV. Let me, from this view of the Gospel, urge every member of my audience to secure its Blessings.

To this divine, this indispensable employment, every motive calls you, which can reach the heart of virtue, or wisdom. The terms, on which these blessings are offered, are of all terms the most reasonable. You are summoned to no sacrifice, but of sin, and shame, and wretchedness. No service is demanded of you, but services of gain, and glory. "*My son, give me thine heart,*" is the requisition, which involves them all. Remember how vast, how multiplied, how noble, these blessings are! Remember, that the happiness of heaven is not only unmingled, and consummate; not only uninterrupted, and immortal; but *ever progressive*. Here all the attributes of body and mind; the peace within, and the glory without; the knowledge, and the virtue; the union of minds, and the beneficence of the hand; gratitude to God, and his complacency in his children; together with the peculiarly divine system of providence in that delightful world; will advance with a constant step towards the ever-retreating goal of absolute perfection. The sanctified infant will here hasten onward to the station, occupied by *Abraham, Moses, and Paul*. These superior Intelligences will regularly move forward to that of angels; and angels will lift their wings to a summit, to which, hitherto, no angel ever wandered, even in the most vigorous excursions of thought. Thus will this divine assembly, make a perpetual progress in excellence, and enjoyment, towards bounds, which ever retire before them, and ever will retire, when they shall have left the heights, on which

Seraphs now stand, beyond the utmost stretch of recollection.

To this scene of glory; all things continually urge you. The seasons roll on their solemn course; the earth yields its increase; to furnish blessings to support you. Mercies charm you to their author. Afflictions warn you of approaching ruin; and drive you to the ark of safety. Magistrates uphold order, and peace, that you may consecrate your labours to the divine attainment. Ministers proclaim to you the *glad tidings of great joy*; and point out to you the path to heaven. The sabbath faithfully returns its mild and sweet season of grace, that earthly objects may not engross your thoughts, and prevent your attention to immortality. The sanctuary unfolds its doors; and invites you to enter in, and be saved. The Gospel still shines to direct your feet, and to quicken your pursuit of the inestimable prize. Saints wait, with fervent hope of renewing their joy over your repentance. Angels spread their wings to conduct you home. The Father holds out the golden sceptre of forgiveness, that you may touch, and live. The Son died on the cross, ascended to heaven, and intercedes before the throne of mercy, that you may be accepted. The Spirit of grace and truth descends with his benevolent influence, to allure and persuade you.

While all things, and God, at the head of all things, are thus kindly, and solemnly employed, to encourage you in the pursuit of this inestimable good, will you forget, that you have souls, which must be saved, or lost? Will you forget, that the only time of salvation is the present? that beyond the grave there is no Gospel to be preached? that, there, no offers of life

are to be made? that no Redeemer will there expiate your sins; and no forgiving God receive your souls? Of what immense moment, then, is the present life! How invaluable every Sabbath; every mean of salvation! Think how soon your last sabbath will set in darkness; and the last sound of mercy die upon your ears! How painful, how melancholy, an object, to a compassionate eye, is a blind, unfeeling, unrepenting immortal!

But, O ye children of Zion, in all the perplexities and distresses of life, let the Gospel be *an anchor to your souls, sure and steadfast*. To the attainment of the happiness, which it unveils, consecrate every purpose, and bend every faculty. In the day of sloth, let it quicken you to energy. In the hour of despondency, let it reanimate your hope. In the season of wo, let it pour *the balm of Gilead* into your hearts. View every blessing as a token of love from the God, to whom you are going; as a foretaste of immortal good. Stretch your imaginations to the utmost; raise your wishes higher and higher, while you live: not a thought shall miss its object; not a wish shall be disappointed. Eternity is now heaping up its treasures for your possession. The voice of Mercy, with a sweet and transporting sound, bids you *arise, and come away*. Your fears, your sorrows, your sins, will all leave you at the grave. See the gates of life already unfolding to admit you. The first-born open their arms to welcome you to their divine assembly. The Saviour, who has gone before to prepare a place for your reception, informs you, that *all things are ready*. With triumph, then, with ecstasy, hasten to enjoy the reward of his infinite labours in an universe of good, *and in the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was*.

THE
CHARGE,
BY THE
REV. JAMES DANA, D. D.
BY NEW-HAVEN.

DEAR SIR,

AS you have been separated to the Gospel of God, by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, we now commit to your pastoral oversight, the Christian society who stately worship in this temple. Charge it upon your soul to take heed to the ministry you have received of the Lord, that you fulfil it.

The character and duty of a Minister of Christ, you will best learn from the Scriptures given by inspiration of God. These are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness; and thoroughly furnish the man of God to every good work. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, that God may, in all things, be glorified. Every word of God is pure as refined gold; add thou not to his words, neither take from them. Keep in view Christ's commission to his ministers, and teach your people to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded.

Determine to make known Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Other foundation can no man lay: on this sure foundation, a wise builder will select durable and rich materials for his work; as gold, silver, precious stones. You are not sent to preach the Gospel with excellency of speech: this must render the crucifixion of no effect. The chief of the Apostles declared the testimony of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, not in enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; that the faith of his converts might stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Five words spoken in the church, with the understanding, and to edification, are preferable to ten thousand words of unnecessary refinement, useless speculation, and thorny controversy. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the

world, and not after Christ. Whosoever consenteth not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, is proud, knowing nothing; but doteth about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell it as a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire, and as an hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Gospel preaching unites Christian doctrines and precepts, sanctions and motives. It is not for man to separate what God hath joined. The grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly; looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things teach and exhort. Would you keep back nothing profitable? would you not shun to declare the whole counsel of God? would you be secure from the blood of all men?—testify constantly, in public, and from house to house, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Ministry is designed for the edification of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Our business lies not with saints only; but also with sinners. The ambassador of Christ beseecheth them, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. He came to call sinners to repentance. His Spirit, from age to age, reproveth the world of sin. The Gospel revelation and ministry are calculated to open the eyes of men, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Thus God magnifies his word. There has been no waste of the precious ointment. The Gospel is preached for a witness. Whether men hear or forbear, they may be sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto them. As you would be unto God a sweet savour of Christ, warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom.

On the deep things of God we know not how to order our speech. His counsels and determinations, established in eternal, unsearchable wisdom and rectitude, demand our implicit reverence, faith, and confidence. The reasons of his dispensations; the mode of his agency; and the times and seasons of his workings, the Father hath reserved in his own power. Who hath known the mind of the Lord; or, being his counsellor, hath instructed him. There are mysteries in the book of revelation. There are similar mysteries, of every day's occurrence, in the books of nature and providence. We receive the witness of men, even in things inexplicable. The witness of God is greater. We may, upon his testimony, receive this great mystery, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

In this conspicuous part of the vineyard, you will be debtor to the wise and the unwise. As a faithful steward, dispense to every member of the household his portion in due season; not preferring one before another. Do nothing by partiality. Different tempers and characters require different modes of address. Wisdom is profitable to direct. The preacher ought to find out acceptable words, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails, fastened by the masters of assemblies. Of some have compassion; making a difference; others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire. Learn of the Saviour not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Often call to mind his charge to his Ministers, Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men; apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing opposers, that God may give them repentance. The spiritual weapons of our warfare are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imagination, and every high thing that exalteth against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Be diligent to know the state of the flock; to recover wanderers from the truth; to guide into the way of peace such as faint for direction in the path of salvation; to establish and animate believers unto life. Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Be ready to spend and be spent for the souls for whom you watch. The love of Christ constraineth us.

Hold fast the form of sound words which you have learned, or may learn, from the sacred Scriptures. The offence of the Cross has not ceased. There are still those to whom it is a stumbling-block: still there are despisers and revilers of it. Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord; for Christ crucified, is, to every one that believeth, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. By sound doctrine, and by standing fast in the Lord, endeavour to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Take heed to thyself; to thy spirit, and to thy life. We put you in mind of the inscription on the plate of pure gold on Aaron's forehead—**HOLINESS TO THE LORD!!** With this visible in your life, and engraved on your heart, a lustre will be reflected on your character and office, superior to gifts and human acquirements. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Happy the Minister who can make this appeal to his hearers, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ!

We preach Christ Jesus **LORD**; not *ourselves*. We are the servants of the churches for Jesus' sake, and it concerns us to serve him with all humility of mind, and with many tears.

Take the oversight of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not as Lord over a Christian people; not as having dominion over their faith; but as an helper of their joy.

Administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to such as are qualified according to the Gospel to receive them; neither requiring nor admitting any other terms of communion than the terms of salvation. Take away the precious from the vile. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? What part hath he who believeth with an infidel?

Lay hands suddenly on no man. Commit this ministry not to novices, puffed up with pride; but to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others.

Entangle not yourself with the affairs of this life. Attend to reading, meditation, and prayer. Make full proof of your ministry, giving yourself wholly to the work, that your profiting may

appear unto all men. Bear the flock on your heart in your daily addresses to the divine throne.

Be not moved by the afflictions of the Gospel. Pass through honour and dishonour; evil report and good; accounting it a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. If you seek to please men, you cannot be the servant of Christ. Study to show thyself approved unto God. The spirit which he giveth is not the spirit of fear; but of fortitude, love, and a sound mind, or practical wisdom. May you never have occasion to ask, Where is the blessedness ye spake of? Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? The joy and support of the primitive ministers, was the testimony of conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they had their conversation in the world.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves. We cannot open the eyes of the blind. We cannot unstop the ears of the deaf. We cannot make dry bones live. O Lord, thou knowest! We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

With a just sense of your own weakness, you will be in the best frame to apply the promise, My grace is sufficient for you. Now, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure hardness as a good soldier. Take to yourself the whole armour of God. War a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. Account not life dear to yourself, so that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry you have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

This charge we give thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom. O Nathaniel, keep that which is committed to thy trust: and thou shalt hereafter see greater things than can now be seen, or known. Thou shalt behold the face of the glorified Redeemer in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness.

Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle, I greatly rejoice to see this day, and to participate in these solemnities.

The God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. AMEN.

THE
RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY
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PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNITED SOCIETY, IN NEW-HAVEN.

THE actual possession of the Christian religion, in every instance, refines and strengthens the social principle which there is in man, and expands his heart with benevolence, gratitude, and joy. Here is found a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. His friendship is attested by the Manger and the Garden, Calvary and the Cross. It is written in tears and blood, and echoed in groans, agonies, and death. Uniform, universal, pure and perfect benevolence, was never found on earth, until Christ, the Lord, came down from heaven. He transfused richly into the Gospel, the benign spirit which incessantly glowed in his own bosom, and which regulated his whole life. This heaven-born wisdom, is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." It is free from affected philanthropy, and stoical apathy. It proclaims peace on earth, breathes good will to men, and ascends in ascriptions of glory to God in the highest. As the beams of the vernal sun dissolve the frost and snows of winter, so where the spirit of the Gospel comes, it softens the heart of stone to flesh, and makes every man a Samaritan, "the bleeding heart to bind, the broken heart to cure." It purifies the polluted, and calms the troubled heart; destroys, so far as its influence extends, bitterness and wrath, with all malice, and makes men "kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love," tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, forgives them.

The ministry of reconciliation was given, and the gospel of grace is dispensed, to form on earth and fit for heaven, a holy, happy society of kindred minds. All Christians have drunk into

the same spirit, and are united by indissoluble, though, at the same time, the most tender ties. They are branches of the same vine; members of the same body, and are one in Christ, as he is in the Father, and the Father in him. They have all one hope of their calling. In heart, hopes, and aims, they are, in fact, one throughout the world. They are connected by a celestial bond, the strength of which intervening mountains, rivers, seas, and oceans, can neither break nor impair. And could they meet from the four quarters of the earth, and be mutually known, they would all salute each other, as brethren in the faith and fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bless'd be the tie that binds
 Our hearts in Christian love;
 The fellowship of kindred minds
 Is like to that above.
 Before our Father's throne
 We pour our ardent prayers;
 Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
 Our comforts and our cares.
 We share our mutual woes;
 Our mutual burdens bear;
 And often for each other flows
 The sympathising tear.

FAWCETT.

Is such the union of all Christians? then the propriety of giving the right hand of fellowship, on occasions like this, must be obvious to all. Ministers are connected by a fellow-feeling, to which, in some respects, other Christians are, ordinarily, strangers; and they have open to them some sources of both suffering and enjoyment, which are peculiar to persons of their profession.

This consideration, my Dear Brother, must, in some measure, lighten the burden which now presses with an almost insupportable weight upon your mind, and which throbs in every pulsation of your heart. You are surrounded, and are addressed, by those who have had feelings such as you now experience, and who can therefore relieve you, in some measure, by their sympathy. In their name, I give you this right hand, the representative of that of them all; and be assured that it is not the fellowship of hands only, but the fellowship of hearts, which we tender you. It is a fellowship in sorrow and in joy.

So far as relates to myself, I know not that I can, even on this occasion, give you any *new* token of friendship. As to all

the scenes of social, and all the duties of religious life, so far as they have occurred, my heart has, from early youth, been unreservedly yours. It is, therefore, with *peculiar* pleasure, with *unutterable* emotions indeed, that I fulfil this appointment of the ordaining council; conform to the uniform usage of the Christian Church, and follow the example of primitive presbyters, James, Cephas, and John; "who," saith Paul, "when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship."

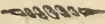
Being, with my Ministerial Brethren, fully persuaded that you are actuated by that same grace which dwelt in Paul and Barnabas, I do, for them, most cordially welcome you to our fraternity. By this universal, but much abused, pledge of sincere affection, we hail you, not as a fellow-christian only, but also as a fellow-labourer in the work of the evangelical ministry. We do publicly acknowledge you to have been regularly inducted into your office, and by the authority of the uncorrupted oracles of the living God, do fearlessly affirm, that you are duly and fully authorized to dispense the word, administer the ordinances, and apply the discipline of the everlasting Gospel.

While we would apprize you of the labours and trials, we welcome you to all the privileges and pleasures of the Christian ministry. It is a noble and a glorious calling. Who would not live, labour, and spend his last breath in doing this work of the Lord! Methinks angels almost envy mortals, while they behold them winning lost souls to Jesus.

Continuing what you now appear to be, and what we believe you to be, we pledge ourselves to aid, strengthen, and console you, by our sympathy, counsel, and prayers. So far as God, in his providence, shall give us opportunity, we promise to do this until counsel can be no longer needed, until prayer shall be lost in praise, and until the only sympathy that can be felt, will be that holy joy which thrills through glorified souls, which tunes the angel's voice, and strikes the seraph's lyre. Amen.

A
CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE,

BY
THE REV. DR. DWIGHT.



My beloved Brethren of this Church and Congregation,

WITH much harmony, and, as we hope, and trust, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, you have chosen a Pastor, to break to you the bread of life. You have now seen him solemnly set apart as a minister of Christ, and consecrated to the duties of his sacred office, *with fasting, prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.* You have heard the charge delivered to him, in which you and your little ones have been solemnly committed to his ministerial care, and his own duty has in the most affecting manner been explained, and enjoined. We congratulate you on this joyful occasion; and earnestly pray, that he and you may be mutual blessings. Brethren, *we commend both him and you to the grace of God.* May he *build you up in the most holy faith; and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* May the Lord God cause that blessing to descend upon you, *which maketh rich in all good, and may he add no sorrow thereto.*

Permit me now, my beloved Brethren, in the name of the ordaining counsel, to *stir up your minds,* also, to the *remembrance* of your own duty. On your conduct will it in a great measure depend, whether he shall prove a blessing to you or not. It is in *your power* to prevent, or promote, his influence; to establish, or destroy, the efficacy of his preaching; and to make his ministry a blessing to you, or a curse. In an important degree you can contribute to render his labours the means of your salvation, or your perdition. Ponder these subjects with the strongest emotions of mind; and consider deeply how they will appear at the final day.

He is young. It will be his duty to give no occasion to any man to *despise his youth.* To seek no such occasion will be your duty. Slight not therefore, neglect not, his instructions, because they proceed from the lips of a young man. Remember, that *Timothy* at an early period of life became an able and

useful minister of Christ; and that his youth did not prevent the Apostle *Paul* from intrusting him with a commission, of great difficulty, among a people, whose character and circumstances demanded the labours, the management, the caution, of superior wisdom.

Remember, that the whole end of his ministry is the good of yourselves, and your children; good present, and good eternal. The whole business of a minister is to do good; to promote comfort, to relieve distress, to spread truth, to build up righteousness, and to accomplish the salvation of men. We are warranted to believe, that your Pastor will make this *his* business. We have a right to expect, that you will endeavour, with all your hearts, to make his labours in it both easy and efficacious.

Steadily, and regularly, attend on his ministrations. Let no reason, which is not solid, which is not satisfactory to your consciences, prevent you from being present at the public worship of God. Come to this house for the purpose of worshipping God, and learning his most holy will. Come not with a mere design to be entertained. Come not to gratify your taste; to be amused with ingenuity, eloquence, and fine composition. Suffer not yourselves to become a theatrical audience; this sacred desk, a stage; and your minister, an actor, exerting all his powers, only to please your fancy, and feelings. Come, to hear the truth of God, the words of eternal life. It will be *his* duty to make his sermons as interesting, and persuasive, as he can. It will be *yours*, to receive, and obey, every doctrine, and precept, of the Gospel, which he shall deliver.

Listen diligently to what he preaches. A dull preacher will make a listless congregation. A listless congregation will make any preacher dull. To preach with fervour, and to hear with attention, are corresponding duties. Neither can easily, or long, exist alone. *Take heed, therefore, how you hear.* Remember always, that God is present, and will record the manner, in which you hear, *in the book, out of which you will be judged.*

Consent cheerfully, that he shall *not shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God.* He is set by his great Master as a watchman to the house of Israel; and must warn them from him. A prime part of his duty is to warn the wicked of the error of his way, that he turn from it, and save his soul alive. If this duty were not done; what would become of the wicked? If it is done,

it cannot fail to give pain. But the preacher *will*, in this case, *deliver his own soul*; and will have strong reasons to hope, that the *wicked will turn from the error of his way, and save his soul alive*. The precepts of the Gospel enjoin also many duties, which involve much self-denial, and, therefore, not a little pain. If these be not inculcated by a minister; they will not be done by his flock; and, if they be not done, the soul will not be saved. Oppose him not, therefore, dislike him not, when he preaches doctrines and duties, which are painful. On the contrary, regard him as sacrificing his ease, and his inclinations, to the will of God, and your own good; and love him for his integrity.

It is not to be supposed, that the doctrines, which he preaches, will uniformly be approved by you all. The reason is obvious. You do not, and will not, entirely agree with each other. Were you yourselves to preach to each other; you would not improbably harmonize less, than you will harmonize with him. Censure him not, therefore, on this ground. Expect not to find a minister, with whom you will be pleased in every thing, or with whose doctrines you will in every respect accord. To accomplish this, both you and he must be more than men. How long, my brethren, do you think it would be, before the rain of heaven would descend upon us, were it to delay until all men should unite in welcoming even this indispensable blessing?

Make it your business, every where, to uphold your pastor in all the duties of his office; to strengthen his hands, and encourage his heart. Speak not evil of him, *yourselves*. Discourage *others* from speaking evil of him. It is your duty, it is the duty of all men, not to *receive a railing accusation against an elder*: a duty, indispensable to his usefulness and comfort, and to your peace and salvation.

When you come to the house of God; bring your families with you. Let your children, so far as may be, be unable to remember the time, when they first came to this sacred place: and be yourselves able to say to your Maker, every Sabbath, when works of necessity or mercy do not prevent, in this holy place, "*Behold, here are we, and the children, whom thou hast given us.*"

To the instructions, which they derive from your Pastor, faithfully add your own. Repeat, explain, and enforce, from

time to time, whatever they learn here : and labour to establish in the morning of life a profound reverence for the Scriptures, and a diligent obedience to their precepts.

Prepare them to walk in the way of wisdom, by *training them up* early, faithfully, and without ceasing, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. A religious education was by the excellent *Baxter* thought to be, not improbably, the chief mean of grace, in countries where the Gospel is regularly established, and continually preached. A great part of the business of ministers was, in his view, to guide, enjoin, and effectuate such an education. If you preach faithfully to your children at home, and your Pastor in the house of God, their eternal good may be justly hoped as the consequence. Children, religiously educated, are the nursery of the Church ; the great hope of the sinful world ; the young stems, which will ultimately become *trees of righteousness* in the garden of God. But, remember, that if you are slothful, negligent of your duty, and forgetful of their salvation, you will undo at home all that he labours to do in the house of God.

Both you and your Pastor, if you expect to receive or accomplish any good for yourselves, or for your children, must preach by example, as well as by precept. The great Preacher, who *spake as never man spake*, lived, also, as never man lived. A good life is the best of all sermons. A bad life will destroy the force of all, that you, or he, can say. If your children see you live in negligence of your duty, and in opposition to the Gospel, they will become *gainsaying and disobedient* ; and among them your Pastor will *labour for naught*, and *spend his strength in vain*.

But it is not enough, that ye do even these things. You must also ask, day by day, the blessing of God upon all that you do. It is devoutly to be wished, it is earnestly to be hoped, that there may not be a *family* in this congregation, on which *the fury of God will be poured out*, because they call not on his name.

You will *hear* the Scriptures preached in the Church. Let me earnestly exhort you to *read* them at home. It is the glorious privilege of this land, that every man has, or may easily have, the Scriptures in his own hands, as well as in his own language. The noble *Bereans* received the word with *all readiness of mind* ; and searched the Scriptures daily, whether

these things were so. The things, which they thus compared with the Scriptures, the truth of which they thus tried by the Scriptures, were those which were preached by *Paul* himself. Even the doctrine of an apostle they were resolved to examine by the word of God. *Therefore*, it is added, *many of them believed.* Follow this illustrious example. Deserve the same honourable character. Try the doctrines of your own minister, and of all ministers, by the word of God. This sacred volume will communicate to you more wisdom, and, let me add, more pleasure, than all other books. Here you will find not only the knowledge of what virtue is, but the motives to become virtuous; motives innumerable, motives infinite. You will become established in the doctrines and duties of Christianity; and will not *be blown about by every wind.* You will be *men in Christ*, and *not babes.*

Let me exhort you to be at peace with each other. What can be more preposterous, than that the children of the same God, and the followers of the same Redeemer, should be mutually unkind; that they should contend; that they should quarrel. God styles himself the God of *Peace.* One of the names of the Saviour is *the Prince of Peace.* How solemnly, then, are those who profess his religion, required to be children of peace! How strangely must those be employed, who, while they are walking together towards heaven, quarrel with each other on their way!

Check contention in the beginning. At the first appearance of it, let every one of you say, with the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, "*Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me: for we are brethren.*" Remember, that every one has his interests, and inclinations; and that you cannot be mutually happy, without mutual concessions.

Make not little things great. Suffer not great things, through passion and prejudice, to become little. How few of those things, which have lamentably divided congregations, churches, sects, and even the Christian world, have been great! What mere trifles have set the *father against his son*, and the *son against his father!* How many quarrels have derived all their importance from the violence, and the obstinacy, with which they have been maintained! A little candour, a little moderation, would have prevented most of the contentions which have disgraced the world. A patient, meek, yielding spirit, is the spirit

of the Gospel, and the glory of man. Cherish this spirit. God will approve and bless you; and you and your children will be better and happier. Daily pray for the divine blessing on the labours of your Pastor, on each other, on your children, and on yourselves. *Paul* thought it necessary, the Spirit of God thought it necessary, that the Churches, to whom he wrote, should pray without ceasing for him, and his fellow apostles, notwithstanding they were inspired; notwithstanding *Christ* had promised them *a mouth, and speech, which all their adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist.* How much more necessary does this seem for their successors! *The house of Jacob never sought the face of God in vain.* No fervent, faithful prayer ever failed of an answer. The blessings which we ask for, may not, indeed, be granted. When they are not, other blessings will be given, which will be more suited to our circumstances, and better supply our wants. In your closets, and on your knees, seek for all good; and you will find it.

Brethren of this Church, we rejoice in all your comfort, peace, and hope. *May the good hand of our God be upon you for good.* Let love, the bond of perfectness, bind you to your Pastor, and him to you. Labour diligently, by your kindness and by your prayers, to strengthen him in the work of the ministry. Watch over each other—Be kind to each other—Pray for each other. *The wisdom, which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits. If any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally unto all, and upbraideth not.* Let your hearts be pure; and your life can scarcely fail of being peaceable. Let no man find a just occasion to ask you, *“What do ye more than others? Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, who is in heaven.* Feel not as if you had already attained, but press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in *Jesus Christ.* And may you, and we, and all who hear me, have reason, through life, and through eternity, to rejoice in the events of this day. And may grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord *Jesus Christ,* be multiplied to us abundantly, above what we are able to ask, or to think. *To him be glory, for ever. Amen.*

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